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Ministry of Attorney General
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ELECTION ACT AMENDMENTS ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY, FAIRNESS

VICTORIA – Government introduced amendments today to the Election Act to ensure B.C.'s electoral system is transparent, fair and democratic. The changes embrace the recommendations made by the Province's chief electoral officer in 2006 and incorporate other changes to modernize the act.

"The B.C. Election Act hasn't been significantly updated since 1995," said Attorney General Wally Oppal. "These amendments modernize the Election Act by clarifying the process for voter registration, establishing a more accurate voters' list and setting reasonable expense limits for political parties and third parties that will be clear and enforced."

The proposed amendments include:

- Door-to-door enumerations will resume after the 2009 election to ensure the most up-to-date voters' list.
- Voter identification requirements will be strengthened to reduce the potential for voter fraud.
- Oral registration will now be accepted, allowing voters to register over the phone.
- Audits will no longer be required for parties who raise or spend less than $5,000, making campaigning less onerous for small parties.
- Tenants will be able to display reasonable election advertising on their premises and landlords and stratas may prohibit election advertising in common areas.
- Contributions from federal political parties will be prohibited to prevent federal tax dollars from funding provincial campaigns.
- New pre-campaign spending limits will be set for candidates, political parties and third-party advertising.
- Political party spending limits will be set at $4.4 million for the campaign. A new limit of $2.2 million will apply to political parties during the 120-day, pre-campaign period in advance of a set election date.
- Individual candidates' spending limits will be standardized and initially set at $70,000 for all candidates, in all regions, during the writ period to increase fairness and avoid confusion.
- A new limit of $70,000 will apply to candidates during the 120-day, pre-campaign period in advance of a set election date.
- Spending limits will be indexed to the rate of inflation.
- A new definition of advertising that mirrors the Canada Elections Act is included to increase clarity.
- Third-party advertising spending limits will be re-introduced that are patterned on the previous sections of the provincial act and the Canada Elections Act – with no more than $3,000 for a single electoral district and $150,000 in total during the 120-day, pre-campaign and 28-day campaign periods.
- Stronger enforcement measures will be provided for the chief electoral officer.

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"These changes to the Election Act reflect the recommendations of the chief electoral officer and the practices of other jurisdictions, particularly the federal process," said Oppal. "This bill will make the process fairer, less confusing and more accessible for all British Columbians."

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